# Annotated Bibliographies

*by Sophia*

# 1. Purpose of Annotated Bibliographies

As you've learned, a bibliography is a list of sources that provides data related to each source, including the author's name, the title, publication information, and page numbers referenced. An **annotated bibliography** is also a list of sources that provides related data, but it contains brief notes about each source to explain how it relates to the thesis.

Annotated bibliographies enable writers to organize key information about sources. They make the drafting and revising processes easier because data can be easily accessed. Writers can refer to their annotated bibliographies while drafting to find the information they need to create in-text or parenthetical citations.

By means of a bibliography, writers let readers know what they found during the research process and where they found it. Annotated bibliographies help writers remember why, and in what way, sources are relevant to their argument, and how to use those sources in their essays.

### 🗎 TERM TO KNOW

**Annotated Bibliography**

A list of research sources that includes data and brief notes about how each source relates to the writer's thesis.

# 2. Compiling Sources

When responding to a source, there are several steps that writers should take to create (and eventually use) an annotated bibliography.

⬢ **STEP BY STEP**

1. Take notes that summarize the thesis and main ideas of the source and respond with your thoughts and impressions about it (or its argument).
2. Ask yourself whether you agree or disagree with the source's claims, and if you see problems with the source that must be addressed (or explored) in your essay. Does something about the source excite you? If so, should you address it in your essay?
3. Note the sources to which your source refers. Often, you can use them too.
4. When you have completed the preceding steps (including answering the questions), record the bibliographic data. This is important because sources sometimes get lost or must be returned to libraries, etc. If you have your notes and the bibliographic data, you probably have everything you need to use the source effectively.

Bibliographic data includes the following:

- The author's (or authors') first and last name(s)
- The title of the source
- Publication information: the date of publication and the name of the publisher, as well as the umbrella source (e.g., the literary journal that published the article you've cited or, for online sources, the URL)
- The date you accessed the source, and the page numbers corresponding to quotations or ideas you plan to use

# 3. Creating an Annotated Bibliography

Annotated bibliographies require writers to provide certain information for each source. Bibliographic data must be formatted according to the required style. In this course, you will be using APA style.

The bibliographic data is then followed by a brief paragraph about the source. This paragraph should include a sentence or two that restates and summarizes (in the writer's own words) the thesis and main ideas of the source, and one or two sentences that indicate how the source could be used to support the writer's essay.

🚩 **HINT**

Based on their current needs or preferences, some writers include longer notes as well as key quotations and paraphrased passages (to be used in the essay) in annotated bibliographies.

When each annotated entry is complete, it should be inserted in the bibliography in alphabetical order, according to the style guidelines that are being used.

# 4. Sample Annotated Bibliography

The following example includes three sources and the annotations that were used before writing an essay. The sources are listed alphabetically, according to the author's last names.

**Sample Annotated Bibliography in APA Format**

Church, S. (2012). On lyric essays and dancing in sequined pants. *Fourth Genre, 14* (2), 173–170.

*Using the metaphor of the title, Church argues that many aphoristic essays use the style to distract readers from the fact that they have nothing to say. He acknowledges that some things are best communicated through juxtaposition but argues for nonlinear essay writing with more careful intent. I think I'll use this for a couple quotations, especially the one about John D'Gata, who practically created the genre of lyric essay, and maybe to back up my exploration of the difference between native and non-native essayists. It's only tangentially related to my topic, but the thesis is in line with mine, although it talks about a different subject.*

Koestenbaum, W. (2001). *Humiliation.* New York, NY: Picador.

*This aphoristic text (story? essay?) uses short sections of narrative and exposition as well as juxtaposition and meaningful gaps to explore the concept of humiliation. The author's argument (if there is one) is that there is no way to encapsulate this topic with words, so he tries to create an experience for his readers, one that will tell us more than he could tell us directly. I will use this as a primary source for my argument about the difference in perspective between native and non-native writers, since Koestenbaum uses these techniques but does not have to (here I will use his other text). Quotations and paraphrases will probably be needed, but it depends on what I present for the other side.*

Twomey, T. (2007). More than one way to tell a story: Rethinking the place of genre in Native American autobiography and the personal essay. *Studies in American Indian Literatures, 19* (2), 22–51.

*The experience and worldview of many Native American writers is one that goes against the linear, cause-and-effect ideology of the dominant culture. This is why so many of them compose texts that use juxtaposition and the author's term, "meaning-filled gaps," to convey feelings and information that do not necessarily correlate to the scientific method and similar tools. I will use this as the primary support for my analysis of, and comparison between, native and non-native writers. Even though Twomey is more interested in the native perspective (and defining it in contrast to the Western worldview), I would like to give equal time to both.*

Note the bibliographic information that corresponds to the first annotation. It includes the writer's name and first initial, followed by the publication date. The APA style guidelines prioritize date over most other information. Next comes the title of the essay, "On Lyric Essays and Dancing in Sequined Pants," followed by the name of the literary journal in which it was published (in italics): *Fourth Genre, Volume 14*, the second issue, and the pages it references. Below that is the paragraph that comprises the annotation of the source. It includes basic information about the article and a short explanation of why the writer thinks it will be useful.

The bibliographic information for the second source is similar. It includes the author's last name, first initial, and the date of publication. However, since this source is a book, it only lists the title, *Humiliation*, and the publishing information. The writer's annotation again includes a short summary of the source and a brief discussion of how she thinks it may be useful. Also note the reference to the other texts she intends to use.

The bibliographic presentation for the last source is the same as the first source. It lists the author's last name, followed by the publication date and the title of the article, "More Than One Way to Tell a Story: Rethinking the Place of Genre in Native American Autobiography and the Personal Essay." It includes the journal in which it was published, *Studies in American Indian Literatures, Volume 19*, the second issue, and the pages on which it appears. The annotation includes a short summary of the article, consisting of its thesis and how the writer plans to use it to support her analysis.

As you can see, annotated bibliographies don't have to be long or complicated to be useful for writers during the drafting process.

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**☑ SUMMARY**

In this lesson, you learned that the **purpose of annotated bibliographies** is to organize key information about your sources to make the drafting and revising processes easier. Once you **compile your sources**, you can **create an annotated bibliography** by recording each source's bibliographic information and writing a short paragraph summarizing the source and how it will be useful for your essay. To see what this looks like in practice, you examined a short **sample annotated bibliography** that included three different sources.

Best of luck in your learning!

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**📄 TERMS TO KNOW**

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A list of research sources that includes data and brief notes about how each source relates to the writer's thesis.